

## **MRS Western Expansion Meeting**

July 30, 2004

A-B Tech, Asheville

Counties Present: Cleveland, Catawba, Jackson, Henderson, Iredell, Cherokee, Union, Lincoln, Yancey, Ashe, Haywood, Alexander, Davie, Davidson

State Staff: Ann Robinson, Sybil Wheeler, Dawn Warren, Cindy Holman, Heather Thomas, Tony Troop, John McCann (UNC School of Social Work)

### Agenda:

Division Updates

Next Meeting

Family Centered Practice – how does it look?, what can we do?

September 23-24<sup>th</sup> meeting

### **Division Updates**

- Many Dear County Director letters out recently. Tony has copies, will touch on topics, if folks have not seen them they may want to look at them.
  - 6/23 - TANF/DV Plans – deadline for postmark today
  - 7/2 - Children's Developmental Service Agencies – staggered implementation
  - 7/2 – Training Schedule
  - 7/13 – MRS Training Schedule
  - 7/7 – LINKS County Plan
  - 7/15 - WF Dept. of Labor TANF program
  - 7/29 – Facility Rates
  - TANF Plan for each county, planning starts this fall
- Staffing Survey – this is used to plan trainings, if information changes, need to let the Division know. Training is limited because of budget cuts.
  - Question was asked about folks having to go to Cornerstone 3A if they previously went to 3B. The answer is that if you are going to be doing assessments, you must attend 3A, regardless of whether or not you have already attended 3B. So, think before folks sign up for 3B, if there is a good chance that you might reorganize or change assignments in your agency and this person might do assessments, send them to 3A to start with.
- Tony pointed out the newsletters, *Practice Notes*, with a good discussion of data and evaluation, and *Training Matters*, which includes a lot of resources on maximizing yourself as a manager.
- Tony showed some data he pulled from Data Warehouse. Can use this to see where your county is, look at similar counties, and also to ensure that 5104s are being entered.
- Staffing Updates
  - Teresa Turner has accepted Rebecca Brigham's position.

- General Assembly appropriated 4 million and 1 million TANF for CPS positions. The intent is to get all counties to a 1-12 caseload. Any money left over after that will be distributed based on a formula created by the Directors. This is not the Division, it is now in **law** to bring to 1-12 caseload ratio. Only for CPS workers.
- \$750,000 appropriated for MRS training and program issues, state still not exactly sure what that means.
- Foster Care and Adoptive Parents getting a \$25 monthly increase.
- Next meeting, this building, Simpson auditorium, on August 27<sup>th</sup> from 10:30 to 1:30.

### **Family Centered Practice**

- 6 Principles of Family Centered Practice
  - Respecting everyone
  - Hearing everyone
  - Seeing everyone's strengths
  - Withholding judgements
  - Sharing power
  - Partnering as a process
- How do we make this about the kids (as both a state and individual agencies?)
- How do these principles look in your intake systems? Specifically, do reporters and SW see strengths?
  - Sometimes workers point out strengths, and families want to deny them.
  - Often reporters have mentioned strengths of families but they don't see those things as strengths.
  - Sometimes SW limit themselves to the concrete things, transportation, job etc. and don't count things like good attitude, determination, etc.
  - In home workers (215 – case planning/case management) workers are more used to looking for strengths than are 210 (investigation/assessment) workers.
  - If someone has been in the system before, tend to be biased, however this is hard not to do, because the risk assessment depends a lot on a family's history.
  - Sometimes a families informal history works against them in small counties ('everyone knows that whole family is like that' kind of thing.)
- How can we see strengths better?
  - The way Supervisor's talk to workers needs to change – when talking with workers, the Supervisor needs to ask them about the family strengths.
  - Complete the Structured Decision Making Tools *with* families. This is not required, but a good idea if feasible.

- MRS attorneys said that cases with the Assessment approach are staying open longer before they get to court, and when they do get to court the judge asks why they have been open so long. Also, cases that have been open longer tend to be more contentious, however if you completed the forms with the families it is harder for them to argue with them.
- How are you engaging the families in the assessment? What is different from before?
  - Catawba – workers are focusing on the scheduling of the appointment and concerned with the logistics of this. The first visit tend to be very long.
  - Haywood – have only been doing it two weeks, also concerned with the longer visit up front, although they acknowledge this may end up saving time later.
  - Lincoln – started 4/1 and is not really a problem
  - Davidson – started 6/1 – fear not meeting required timelines
  - One county said their problem is the number of Hispanic families they have to meet with and there is no translator available.
  - The lesson from the 10 is that they talked to the families and said” I need to meet with you by this time – when can you meet between now and then?” Usually works ok. The first visit does take longer, but there are not more visits, just longer.
  - If you can’t reach them on the phone, you can go to the house and then say “Is this a good time, or can we set up a time for me to come back before...?”
  - Catawba – problem with calls that come in on Friday afternoon
  - Cleveland – have night duty folks who only work at night so they may transfer the case after the initial visit.
  - The 10 vary, but the lesson learned is that workers need to start moving on the case ASAP and not let it sit until the weekend. Also this means it is important to get the report to a worker from the intake/screening quickly.
- Issues with Mental Health because of re-organization (began as a sidebar on break.)
  - Staff leaving MH before they lose their jobs, so hard to get services for families.
  - Sometimes hard to find the agency that is actually providing services.
  - If workers can’t find someone who is providing services, let Tony or someone at the state know and we will find out who it is - the state DSS and MH are working together.
- Domestic Violence
  - Policy rewritten since original training. Will roll out again soon, on fast track, training will be in a couple of months. Learned that we need DSS folks to train, so we will not start training until we have those folks in place,

- 2 big issues around assigning cases to Family Assessment are Domestic Violence and Substance Abuse. The original 10 vary on these issues.
- If counties want to talk to the original 10, should talk to more than one and get different points of view. Dawn suggested you talk to someone who does it differently from the way you want to do it and just see how they handle it.
- DV advocates want cases to be handled Family Assessment so that we can partner with the non-offending parent victim.
- Remember that you do not have to have a Forensic case to hold someone criminally responsible.
- Remember to contact Work First who have a 3 year history of working with the DV folks.
- Collateral Contacts – question was asked if they have to contact those listed on the report and those given by parent. Answer is yes (page 19 of manual). Only exception is when you have determined it to be a bogus report.
- Child & Family Teams & provision of in-home services
  - Working out the logistics of the meetings is often very difficult, but meetings have gone well once they happen.
  - Barriers that Tony has heard: getting a facilitator, scheduling all the necessary folks at the same time.
  - Remember can use IV-E Waiver money to hire a facilitator. Alamance and Caldwell have done that.
  - Program Improvement Plan – NC the first state to have a chance to come out of it. CFT a part of PIP.
  - Note that you *have* to (according to policy) have CFT meetings after case decision, but you certainly *can* use them before.
- In Home Service Re-Design – one worker for the life of the case.
  - Of those here, only Haywood, Cleveland, and Davidson have this as their current plan.
  - Haywood had only been doing it two weeks, right now the challenge is getting rid of backlog
  - Davidson – staffing shortages creating problems.
  - Of the 10, everyone agrees that it is best for the family to have one worker keep the case, but it is not always practical. The issue is that if the worker has 215 cases and get a new 210 case with the 24 mandated timelines, the 215 families will suffer and go on the back burner.
  - Most 215 cases should be coded “z” – but these can only be moderate, high, or intensive cases (no low because in order to use “z” have to be able to say the child would be a candidate for Foster Care if it were not for these services.) 210 money is capped.
  - With frontloading services, should see more 210 cases and fewer 215 cases. The 215 cases will be the most needy kids and you can spend more time with these cases since there are fewer of them.

- Studies from other states have shown it is better for the family when one worker keeps the case.
- Shared Parenting – how are you involving Foster Parents in placement meetings?
  - FP helpful with visitation, also helps with relinquishments. Some adoptive parents have even been ok with biological parents still visiting.
  - Kevin Kelley will have trainings for private providers on Shared Parenting.
  - Barriers – most people say the FP set up the barriers. So, how do you overcome these with the FP?
    - Have had licensing people talk to FP.
    - Pointed out to FP the things they were already doing that were components of SP.
    - Had a FP and a Biological parent talk to a panel of new FP.
    - Tony pointed out that the FP get their first impression of the BP from the person (SW) who drops off the child. That SW has a responsibility to examine their body language and think about what they are saying and the impression they are creating about the BP. Give information to FP in a positive way.
- Work First
  - Counties have made false starts because of lack of knowledge of WF.
  - Need to learn about the plans that WF uses and how they can work with CW plans.
  - Often WF has a long history with the family and can help ID strengths. WF has been predisposed to look for strengths, whereas in the past, CW has been predisposed to look for weaknesses.
  - Tony's suggestion – WF has always interviewed people off of a form. Many CPS workers are not comfortable with this and have problems doing the Structured Intake forms with the family because of this. May want to consider sitting in with a WF person to develop this skill.
- September 23-24<sup>th</sup> at New Hanover DSS.